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SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST AND NY TIMES ARTICLES ON  
CONGRESSIONAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT OPPOSING PLUTONIUM  
SHIPMENT

1. AUGUST 6 ARTICLES IN THE WASHINGTON POST AND THE NY TIMES REPORTED A CONGRESSIONAL LETTER SENT TO THE PRESIDENT ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, OPPOSING THE SCHEDULED SHIPMENT OF PLUTONIUM FROM FRANCE TO JAPAN. THE LETTER, SIGNED BY 15 DEMOCRATS (10 REPRESENTATIVES AND 5 SENATORS), STATES THE SHIPMENT IS UNNECESSARILY DANGEROUS AND INCLUDES ENOUGH PLUTONIUM FOR 30 NUCLEAR BOMBS. THE POST QUOTES REP. RICHARD OTTINGER (D-N.Y.) IN SAYING THAT "STUDIES SHOW THAT JAPAN 'HAS AT LEAST A FOUR YEAR SUPPLY OF PLUTONIUM ALREADY, BUT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WON'T TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT IN APPROVING THE SHIPMENT.'" THE TIMES ARTICLE REPORTED THAT SEN. WILLIAM PROXMIRE SAID THAT THE SEA SHIPMENT WAS UNNECESSARILY VULNERABLE TO ATTACK AND SAFER AIR TRANSPORT METHODS BEING DEVELOPED WOULD BE READY "WITHIN A FEW YEARS."

2. PRESS GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN IS REPEATED BELOW FOR EMBASSY'S USE SHOULD QUESTIONS ARISE:

Q.

A LETTER FROM 15 DEMOCRATS TO THE PRESIDENT REGARDING THE SHIPMENT OF PLUTONIUM TO JAPAN STATES THAT THIS SHIPMENT WOULD POSE "GRAVE SECURITY RISKS WORLDWIDE" AND THAT IT IS "TOTALLY UNNECESSARY AND DANGEROUS AND SETS AN EXTREMELY UNFORTUNATE PRECEDENT WHICH IS BEING IGNORED AND UNDERESTIMATED."

A.

THIS REQUEST FOR RETRANSFER APPROVAL INCLUDES A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PHYSICAL PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS WHICH THE JAPANESE WILL BE PROVIDING FOR THE SHIPMENT. THESE PHYSICAL PROTECTION MEASURES MEET OR EXCEED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND RELEVANT NRC REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS. THE GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED ARE TAKING APPROPRIATE STEPS TO RESPOND IN THE EVENT OF ANY TYPE OF EMERGENCY. THE TYPES OF POTENTIAL THREATS POSTULATED BY THE CONGRESSIONAL LETTER HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY CONSIDERED, AND WE HAVE NO INFORMATION LEADING US TO BELIEVE THAT ANY REAL THREAT EXISTS FOR THIS SHIPMENT. THUS WE CANNOT AGREE THAT THIS SHIPMENT POSES THE SECURITY RISKS DESCRIBED.

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Q.  
THE LETTER ALSO STATES THAT JAPAN "HAS AT LEAST A FOUR-YEAR SUPPLY OF PLUTONIUM ALREADY." UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WHY IS THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION GOING AHEAD WITH THIS SHIPMENT?

A.  
THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HAS TOLD US THAT ALL THE SEPARATED PLUTONIUM IN JAPAN HAS BEEN OR IS BEING FABRICATED AS FUEL FOR VARIOUS REACTORS. IF THIS PLUTONIUM IS NOT SHIPPED TO JAPAN AND FABRICATED INTO FUEL FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL BREEDER REACTOR BY MID-WINTER, THE REACTOR WILL HAVE TO BE SHUT DOWN UNTIL ADDITIONAL FUEL BECOMES AVAILABLE. CONTRARY TO THE ASSERTIONS MADE, THERE IS A PRESSING NEED IN JAPAN FOR THIS PLUTONIUM. THIS INFORMATION WAS PROVIDED TO CONGRESSIONAL STAFF DURING SEVERAL RECENT BRIEFINGS ON THIS SHIPMENT.

Q.  
REPRESENTATIVE OTTINGER IS QUOTED IN THE WASHINGTON POST THIS MORNING AS STATING THAT STUDIES SHOW JAPAN "HAS AT LEAST A FOUR-YEAR SUPPLY OF PLUTONIUM ALREADY, BUT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WON'T TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT IN APPROVING THE SHIPMENT." WHAT ARE THE STUDIES OTTINGER REFERS TO AND WHY

WON'T THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE THE CURRENT SUPPLY OF PLUTONIUM IN JAPAN INTO ACCOUNT?

A. WE DO NOT KNOW THE STUDIES MR. OTTINGER IS REFERRING TO. ALL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE ADMINISTRATION INDICATES THAT THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT IS CORRECT WHEN IT TELLS US THAT ALL THE SEPARATED PLUTONIUM IN JAPAN IS CURRENTLY BEING USED OR HAS ALREADY BEEN USED, AND THAT THE JAPANESE BREEDER REACTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WILL BE DELAYED IF THIS PLUTONIUM IS NOT SHIPPED FROM FRANCE THIS FALL OR WINTER. AS PRESIDENT REAGAN STATED IN HIS JULY 16, 1981 POLICY STATEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION:

"THE ADMINISTRATION WILL ALSO NOT INHIBIT OR SETBACK CIVIL REPROCESSING AND BREEDER REACTOR DEVELOPMENT ABROAD IN NATIONS WITH ADVANCED NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAMS WHERE IT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A PROLIFERATION RISK."

DAM  
END OF MESSAGE

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